MODERN STYLE SINGING ("CROONING")

AL BOWLLY

1st Edn, 1934
fine copy £450

first book of its kind, by the man who invented 'crooning'

no flyleaf as issued

Portrayed by Suggs in 2008 film
The Edge of Love

MODERN STYLE SINGING

Trans.

MODERN STYLE SINGING

("CROONING")

by

AL BOWLLY

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Al Bowlly

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CHAPTER ONE

What *is* "Crooning"?

MOST things that are new come in for a lot of abuse. Especially if they are new art forms. Even to call them "art forms" is enough to rouse the ire of the thoroughly hardbitten diehards.

And of all the many innovations of the past few years "crooning" has had directed at it the most derision and contempt.

Before we go any further with this book I would like to deal with this attitude, because until the reader really understands the reasons for it, and the answer to it, he is likely to suffer from some kind of inferiority complex—to feel that the ambition to become a singer in the modern microphone style is something shameful and unmanly.

The very word 'microphone' supplies the whole answer. It is this simple electrical device which gave rise to the whole art of "crooning," brought into being hosts of new artists, and immeasurably widened the scope of the entertainment profession.

Let us pause for a moment to examine this word "crooning." It is a horrible expression, and

I use it only because there seems to be nothing else It is associated with all the unpleasant, smeary, wobbling vocalisms that one ever heard. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that modern microphone singing, even of popular dance tunes, need not be like that.

Different. dictionaries give varying definitions, although none of them is up-to-date enough to define it as " quiet singing into a microphone, in the modern dance-band style." Their efforts vary between " a low moaning sound, as of animals in pain " to " the soft singing of a mother to her child."

Neither of these is very complimentary, but at least the former supplied a new joke for hard-up humorists !

It is generally accepted as being a sign of weakness, I am well aware, to offer a defence when no specific attack has been made, but nevertheless there have been so many general attacks on this type of singing, and so few defences of it, that I feel justified in entering the lists.

The microphone brought into being, and sometimes into very prominent being, a whole host of singers who otherwise would never have been heard. There were many performers whose untrained voices, although naturally sweet and pleasing, were not strong enough for the public platform. To these

the microphone was more than kind and gave them the power, with the turn of a switch, to drown the most brazen-lunged quasi-operatic singer who ever shook the rafters.

This angered the diehards. "A poor kind of singer is this," they said scornfully, "who has to call in artificial aids before he can be heard!"

But that seems to me to be a poor argument. It is as logical to say "A poor kind of a star is that which cannot be seen without a telescope!"

Confronted with that simile, the anti-crooner usually changes his point of attack. "How can you call these people singers," he insists, "if they have never been taught to sing, know nothing about voice production, and less about diction?"

To which the answer is that if a crooner produces a sound which is unpleasing, and distorts his words beyond recognition, he will not be a success, even as a crooner.

Most crooners *are* untrained in the first principles of singing and enunciation; more's the pity. But it must be admitted.

But whose is the fault? Who is it who has the knowledge to teach these "natural singers" (for that is what they are) where and how to breathe, how to pronounce their consonants and vowels, how to phrase, how to sing in their best register,

how to control their vibrato, reduce their portamento, and free them of all the annoying tricks which ignorance and inexperience bring ?

The legitimate singers and teachers, of course. But they will not. " No," they say, " you learn to sing *our* way or not at all ! "

And so the crooner continues in his errors, sneered at by just the very people who could help him most. There is no possible way for a singer to learn to sing in the modern microphone style. There is no school which caters for it, no recognised teachers, the musical colleges are just contemptuous, and this, so far as I know, is the first book which has ever been written on the subject.

Is it any wonder, then, that most crooners are dreadful ? Yes, I readily admit it. But then, are not most " straight " singers, judged by the highest standards in their own sphere, also dreadful ? Is all music bad because a bad café band plays it badly ? Indeed no.

There are crooners who produce beautiful sounds with their voices. Surely this is undeniable ? Their singing may not be academic, but it is often intensely pleasing, and unquestionably gives pleasure to millions.

What more can be asked of singing than that ?

CHAPTER TWO

The Effect of the Microphone

IT is perhaps unnecessary to explain that a microphone picks up and amplifies the slightest sound. It can make the footfall of a fly sound like a hundredweight of coal being dropped. It can distort out of all recognition. Or it can merely reproduce at a distance.

Whether it was used first by the gramophone studios or by the broadcasters I do not know, nor does it matter much. To all intents and purposes both worlds of "reproduced" entertainment discovered its possibilities at once.

In the old days, gramophone recording was done by the horn method. That is, all the sound was directed into one or more large horns. A considerable amount of effort was necessary to cut the "wax" at all, and even then half the sound that went into the horn never went on to the wax, and even less came out of the finished record.

It was necessary, therefore, for singers to sing with considerable vigour if they were to record

at all. Anything in the nature of a whisper just wouldn't have " cut."

Then came the microphone, and everything was changed.

Singers, instrumentalists, and recording artists of all kinds were urged to " take it easy." The danger became not under-recording but the reverse. The " mike " was " throttled down " and the artist asked to stand back a little, please.

The robust tenors, whose redness of face was in direct ratio to their height of note, became something of a problem.

The microphone has an unpleasant habit of " blasting," which is a jarring, shivering sound, when the volume forced into it is too much for the delicate amplifying apparatus.

Thus it was that, at first, until they grew to understand it better, the recorders found difficulty in coping with the vocalists who were ignorant of the requirements of King Mike.

And the singers, having been taught to sing in a certain way, found it very difficult to do otherwise. Their training had always been based upon the requirements of filling large halls and theatres. Volume, especially on top notes, had too often been their fetish.

This does not mean to say, of course, that all "legitimate" singers are bellowers, or that none of them can control their voices to softness. But it was just that their style of singing was, in those early days, un-microphonic.

Then somebody discovered that even if one sang quite softly the "mike" picked it up with just as much strength as if one shouted at it. And with an infinitely more pleasant effect.

Vocalists explored this new idea of "whispering-vocalism." It intrigued some of them; others were just contemptuous of "this travesty of singing."

But those who tried it found that they could put their mouths to within an inch or two of the microphone and sing so quietly as to be inaudible a yard away. Yet their voices reproduced as strongly as if they had sung at the top of their voices and used every effort.

And in this absence of effort they found several virtues. Firstly, that it suited the microphone so well; secondly, that it gave a new timbre to their voices by making audible harmonics and upper partials which had never previously been heard; thirdly, that it enabled them to enunciate with far greater clarity than before; fourthly, that it gave to their voices, when reproduced, an almost

steroscopic effect; fifthly, that it eliminated most of the danger of blasting; and, sixthly, that it was far easier work and was something new, anyway.

All of which called into being a new kind of singer. Some of the more versatile of the "straight" singers studied this new method, mastered it, and adapted it to their own ends.

Those who couldn't or wouldn't were eventually catered for by the growing technique of the recording or broadcasting engineers, and continued to sneer at "these whispering vocalists."

CHAPTER THREE

Why Sing At All?

IT is platitudinous to say that singing is the most common form of self-expression. Everyone, from a Cabinet Minister in his bath to the housewife in her kitchen, gives vent to pleasurable feeling in snatches of song. That the singing may be out of tune, harsh, raucous, tuneless, or even unrecognisable as such, does not matter a great deal. It is the desire to express happiness in song which is the point.

Of course, people want to sing for lots of other reasons. Eliminating the bathtub-and-kitchen vocalists, however, would-be singers are actuated usually by one of two motives.

The first is the desire to make money; the second is vanity. Usually it is a combination of both.

I do not include the man who is content to sing to an audience consisting only of himself; only the man (or woman) who "feels" he (or she) can sing.

Every writer on popular music in the lay Press is deluged with letters from would-be crooners. "My friends tell me that I am much better than most singers one hears on the air." "Although I have had no experience I would like to become the singer of one of the big dance bands." "Please will you hear me sing, as I am convinced I can surprise you." And so on and so on.

All these people fall into the money-or-vanity class. Mostly with the latter predominating to such an extent that they are convinced that the former will come easily. Never was there a graver error.

The way of the crooner is hard. Because of the very fact that every other person is convinced that he or she is a Heaven-sent singer, the market is more than overcrowded. Obviously, too, the vast majority are useless, and serve only to excite still further derision for the much derided art of microphone singing.

There is hardly a person, of either sex, or almost any age, who cannot "sing" in some sort of way. Fortunately, a lot of these people have neither the time nor the inclination to inflict their efforts on others.

But the remainder have, apparently, both. And it is to these that this book is addressed. I hope it will save them a lot of trouble, and provide them

with at least a few signposts in the wilderness of doubt and ignorance in which most of them wander.

Do not be offended if my attitude seems a little harsh, or my remarks over-cynical. But, really, out of every hundred who are convinced that they can sing, ninety are frankly dreadful, six passable, three good, and one likely to develop into anything worth while.

You, dear reader, may be just that one. Indeed you will be lacking in self-confidence unless you think so.

But do, I beg you, temper your self-confidence with self-criticism. Take it from me that unless you have had some form of coaching or advice you cannot possibly avoid making dozens of mistakes. Even if you *are* gifted with a "natural" voice, it must be cultivated, you know.

It is the object of this book to draw attention to these possible faults; not to "teach you to sing." The very fact that you are reading it suggests (unless mere idle curiosity is the reason) that you are interested in Modern Style Singing, and that you *have* got a secret idea tucked away somewhere, that, given the chance, you could outshine the most crooning crooner that ever irritated the irascible ears of all the old gentlemen who write to the papers about "emasculated moaning."

I do not claim that the reading of this book will turn you into a first-class dance-style singer, but, with every modesty, I do suggest that if you follow carefully all that I have written you will at least be improved.

CHAPTER FOUR

Music Training Necessary

IT may come as a shock to some of my readers to learn that I consider careful and painstaking study and practice the only way ever to become a successful dance-style singer.

Even if the beginner is gifted with a " natural " voice, and can speak clearly and distinctly, he is a very long way from being able to join a dance band as a singer.

Out of all the hundreds of aspirants I have seen or who have written to me, not one per cent knew the first thing about music. Even less had the ability to sing at sight a number which they had never previously seen.

Sight-reading is absolutely essential for the ambitious singer, as is an all-round knowledge of the elements of music. Without it, no singer will ever get beyond the drawing-room stage. Certainly they will stand no chance amid the fierce competition of professionalism.

This may be disquieting news to many who had hoped that this book would contain a few hints

which, having been hastily read, would assure success as a singer.

But I'm afraid it has got to be faced that, without a practical knowledge of music, and in particular the ability to sight-read, the would-be crooner is so heavily handicapped as to be a non-starter.

But do not let this be too discouraging. All the musical knowledge you will need will be given to you within these pages and in a form, I hope, which will make it easy and pleasant to assimilate. But there is no use skipping or skimping it.

If your ambition goes no further than to sing at occasional concerts, or to amuse yourself and a small circle of friends, then perhaps you need not practice quite so hard. But even in these circumstances the knowledge will be an enormous help.

I have no doubt that there are many instrumentalists who will read this book, both professional and semi-pro. These, no doubt, are congratulating themselves on already having a knowledge of the rudiments of music, which they may well do. But do not let them think, however, that there is no necessity for them to learn further. Many musicians, who can read at sight almost any *instrumental* music which is put before them, are quite at sea when it comes to vocal reading.

The first subject to be dealt with, then, is music. If I were teaching in person instead of through the medium of the printed word, I would regard voice culture as being the first consideration. But this latter calls for examples in written music, and without a knowledge of at least the rudiments of notation how is the student to be able to understand them ?

CHAPTER FIVE

Note Values

THE reader who already has a knowledge of music will recognise that much has been omitted from this chapter. This has been done with the desire to avoid overburdening the student's mind with information which, although essential to the expert orchestral instrumentalist, is unnecessary to the singer who intends to limit his or her singing to the current ballads and dance tunes of the day.

Firstly then, note values. The largest note (that is, the one of the longest comparative duration) is the semibreve. This is an oval " open " note written without a tail, thus :—

Ex. 1

This note can be divided into halves, each of which is called a minim. A minim is also an oval open note but it has a stem, thus :—

Ex. 2

It is immaterial, incidentally, which way the stems point—it is merely a matter of convenience in writing or engraving.

The minim is divided into two halves, each of which is called a crotchet. A crotchet is a "black" note, and has a stem, thus :—

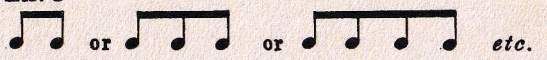
Ex. 3

The crotchet is divided into halves also, each of which is called a quaver. The quaver is also a "black" note and also has a stem. But it is distinguished from the crotchet in that it has attached to its stem a tail, thus :—

Ex. 4

When several quavers are used together, the tails are sometimes joined in one straight line, thus :—

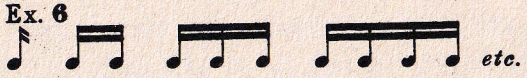
Ex. 5



The next subdivision is the halving of the quaver, which results in two semiquavers. Each semiquaver is a black note with a stem and *two* tails.

These also are joined together when they appear in groups but with *two* thick lines, thus :—

Ex. 6



The next subdivision is the demi-semiquaver, which is half a semiquaver, and looks the same except that it has three tails attached to its stem, and is joined, when in groups, by three black lines, thus :—

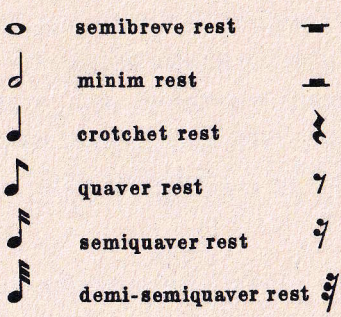
Ex. 7

There are still further divisions of notes, but you need not concern yourself with them. Indeed, it is unlikely that you will meet any notes of less duration than quavers. So that all you have to concern yourself with, then, are the semibreve, the minim, the crotchet, and the quaver.

The next thing to consider is the rest. Each note value has a corresponding rest, indicating silence in that particular part of the bar.

Here is a list of all the rests corresponding to their notes. The difference between the semibreve and the minim rests, by the way, is that the latter is *above* the stave line (which will be explained later) and the former below it.

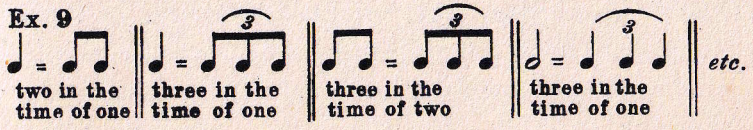
Ex. 8



The only remaining thing to be learned about time values is the triplet, which is a device much met with in all kinds of music. Briefly, a triplet is three notes played in the time of two.

For instance, in the same way that a crotchet can be divided into two quavers, it can also be divided into three triplet-quavers, indicated by the figure three and a " brace " over the notes. Thus :—

Ex. 9



When you get through all the examples which appear in this chapter you should clearly understand the various notes and rests and their divisions. But do not, I beg of you, pass on to the next chapter until you know them all unhesitatingly

and accurately. To leave this part of your study half done will result in loose singing habits which you will never be able to shake off, and which will make your sight-reading worthless, and your singing-tempo a nuisance to yourself and anyone who is unfortunate enough to have to accompany you.

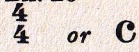
CHAPTER SIX

Time Signatures

Now you are familiar with all the notes and rests, we can proceed to the grouping of these into the various time signatures.

One of the most used is that known as four-four, or common time, which is indicated thus :—

Ex. 10



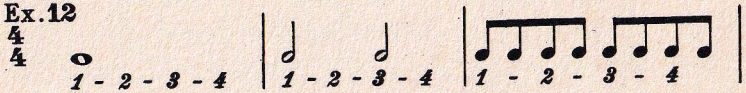
This means that the music is divided up into groups of four crotchets, *or their equivalent.* Each group is separated from the next by what are known as bar-lines. Here, for instance, is a bar of four-four time :—

Ex. 11

But, bearing in mind that the *equivalent* of four crotchets can also be used to make up a bar of

four-four time, it will be seen that the following are also all bars of four-four time :—

Ex.12



Note the figures underneath. They indicate how the time is to be counted. For instance, in the first bar the semibreve is held for the whole four beats without a break.

In the second bar each minim receives two beats. But in order to avoid confusion as to where they are in the bar, the four is still counted, the first minim lasting for " 1-2 " and the second minim lasting for " 3-4." The " 1-2-3-4 " must be counted steadily and without speeding up, slowing down, or stopping. The beats must be as steady as the ticking of a clock.

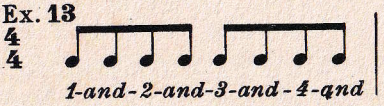
Do not worry yourself yet with the *speed* of the beats. For the time being just count to yourself in a fairly steady tempo (time), and take care to keep the counting even and steady.

The next bar of Example 12, you will notice, contains eight quavers—remember that each crotchet equals two quavers. These, too, must be counted, sung, or played, in exactly the same time as it takes to count, sing or play four crotchets. Therefore

each beat is divided into two. You will notice in Example 12 that each figure covers two quavers.

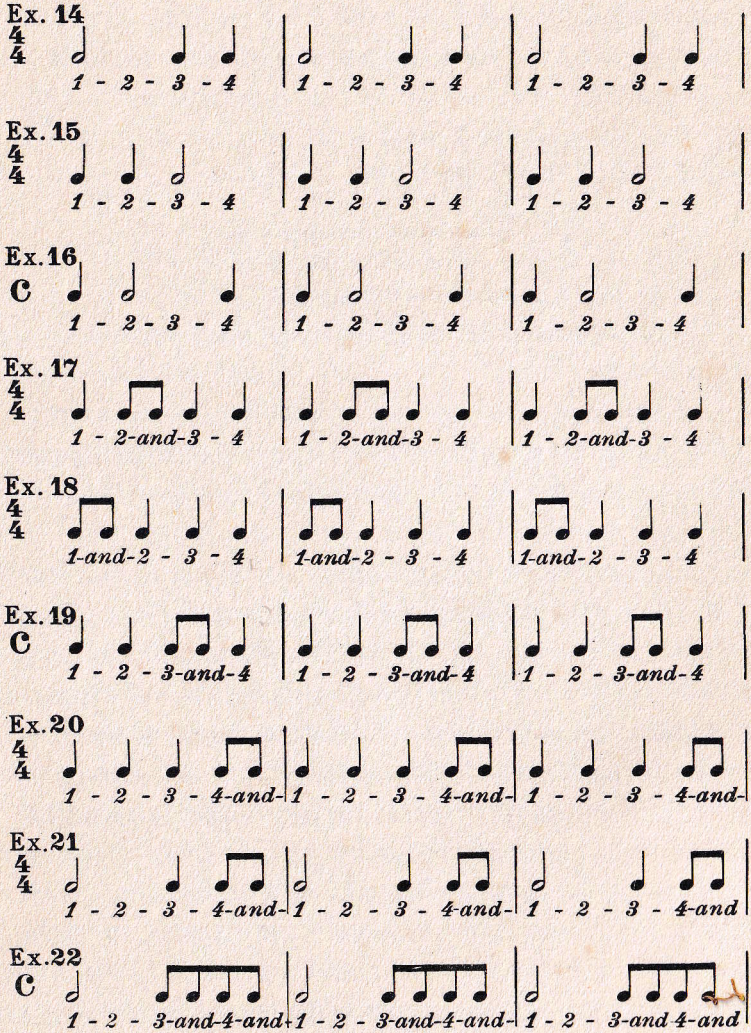
Another way of counting quavers is to split up the figures (or beats) into two by adding the word " and " after each one. Thus :—

Ex. 13



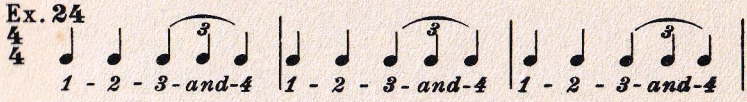
Thus each note is sung or played on either a figure or an " and."

But bars are not all divided up so simply. The notes of varying values are mixed, although always totalling up to the original four crotchets in duration.

Overleaf are a few examples of mixed note values. Tap their rhythm out on a table, counting out aloud whilst you do so. Go over all these examples at a steady tempo until you can go through them without hesitation or mistakes. And remember that it is better to be slow and accurate than fast and slovenly. One of the worst faults of all singers, straight, " crooning," trained, or untrained, is their inability to keep good time. So you might as well start laying the foundations of a good rhythm sense right now by going through these exercises with the greatest care. Do remember, too, to keep the counting *steady*.

Ex. 14
1 - 2 - 3 - 4
Ex. 15
1 - 2 - 3 - 4
Ex. 16
1 - 2 - 3 - 4
Ex. 17
1 - 2-and-3 - 4
Ex. 18
1-and-2 - 3 - 4
Ex. 19
1 - 2 - 3-and-4
Ex. 20
1 - 2 - 3 - 4-and-
Ex. 21
1 - 2 - 3 - 4-and-
Ex. 22
1 - 2 - 3-and-4-and-

Ex. 23

Ex. 24



All these examples must be carefully tapped out. Make no attempt to sing yet, otherwise you might get yourself into bad habits which would be difficult to shake off.

Once you have mastered all these you must turn your attention to other time signatures.

Probably the most used of all in modern dance music is that which is known as alla-breve, or half-common. This is indicated by a letter C (the same as Common) but with a line drawn through it, thus:—

Ex. 25

Alla-breve time has exactly the same number, or quantity, of notes to a bar as common time. In other words, four crotchets or their equivalent, thus :—

Ex. 26

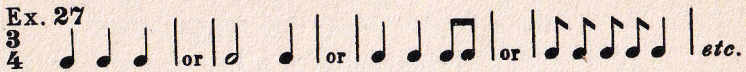
The only difference between the two tempi is that one has four impulses to the bar and the other

has two, which means, broadly speaking, that for common time the conductor will beat four in a bar, whilst for alla-breve he will beat two in a bar. This is a rough and ready definition, but it will serve.

Remember, anyway, that alla-breve has the same note-values as four-four time.

Next, comes three-four time, in which waltzes are written. Three-four has *three* crotchets to each bar (or their equivalent), thus :—

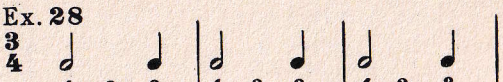
Ex. 27



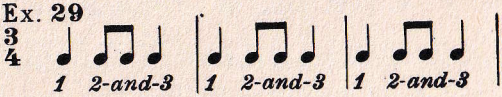
You will notice that although the time signature may change, the *values* of the notes remain the same. Thus a crotchet is still " one," and the minim is still " one-two."

Here are a few examples in three-four time, which are to be tapped out in the same way as Exes. 14 to 24.

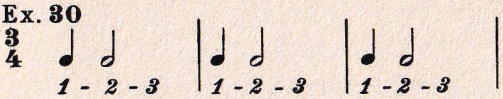
Ex. 28



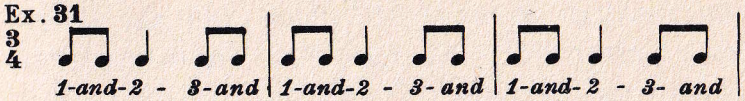
Ex. 29



Ex. 30

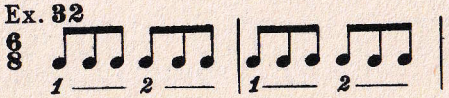


Ex. 31



The next most commonly used is six-eight, which has six quavers to each bar (or their equivalent), thus :—

Ex. 32

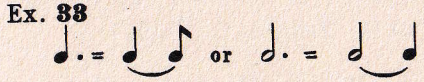


Note that this is counted in *two*, and that although there are six notes to these bars there are only two beats. In saying this I am thinking particularly of dance tunes. In straight music six-eight is often beaten very slowly in six beats to the bar.

As we come to the consideration of six-eight it is necessary to explain something else—the dotted note.

When a dot is placed after a note, it increases the value of that note by half. Thus :—

Ex. 33

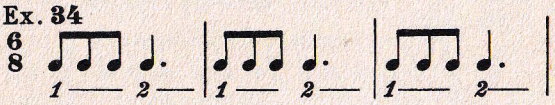


The short curved line between the two notes is a tie and indicates that the two notes are to be

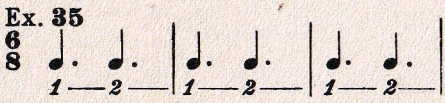
sounded together without a break. Thus, in the second half of Ex. 33 the counting would be " 1-2-3."

Once you have grasped this, return to the consideration of six-eight, which uses the dotted note a great deal. Here are some typical examples of six-eight rhythms. If you find them difficult to tap out, divide each bar into six, subsequently speeding up to count two to each bar.

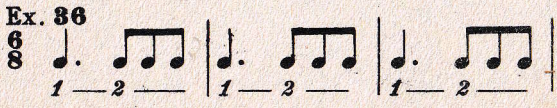
Ex. 34



Ex. 35



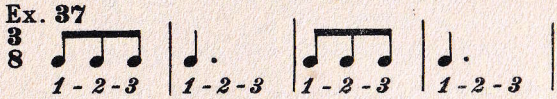
Ex. 36



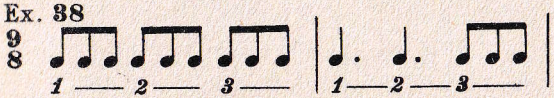
The three other principal time signatures might be regarded as first-cousins to six-eight, since they are extensions of the same idea.

They are three-eight, nine-eight, and twelve-eight, and, as their names imply, contain respectively, three quavers to the bar, nine quavers to the bar, and twelve quavers to the bar. Thus :—

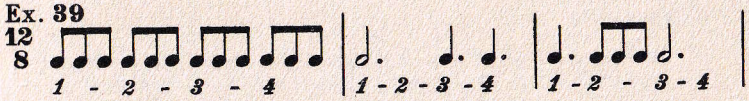
Ex. 37



Ex. 38



Ex. 39

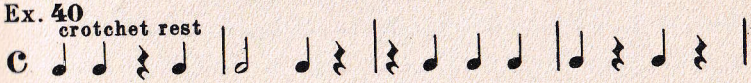


These comprise all the principal time signatures. There are certain others which may be met with very occasionally, such as five-four (five crotchets to the bar) ; six-four (six crotchets to the bar) ; seven-four (seven crotchets to the bar) ; three-two (three minims to the bar) ; and so on. But their meanings are obvious once the principal time signatures have been grasped.

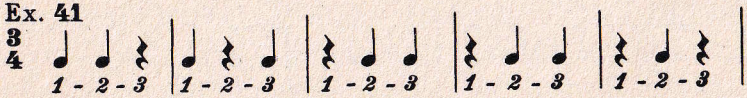
All bars have to be *full*. In other words, the value of the time signature must be made up in either crotchets or rests. Rests must be counted in exactly the same way, and at exactly the same speed, as the notes.

Here are a few examples of mixed notes and rests. Count them out, tapping for the notes and remaining silent for the rests. Remember, it is vitally important to keep strict tempo.

Ex. 40

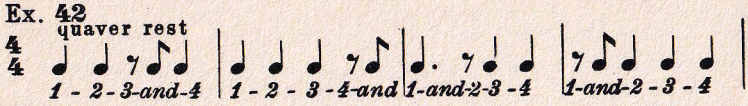


Ex. 41



Ex. 42

quaver rest



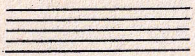
Ex. 43

CHAPTER SEVEN

Notation

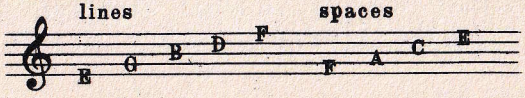
THE next step in your initiation to the mysteries of music is notation. All music is written on what is called the stave, which consists of five horizontal lines thus :—

Ex. 43a.



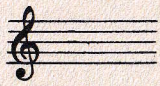
Each of these lines has a name ; so has each space. Here they are :—

Ex. 44

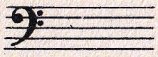


You will perhaps be helped in remembering these names by noticing that the spaces spell the word " Face " ; and a simple mnemonic for the lines is " Every Good Boy Deserves Favours," in which the initial letters of each word are the names of the notes on the lines.

These are the notes in what is known as the treble stave, which is indicated by this "clef" sign :—

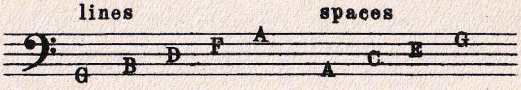
Ex. 44a 

There are several clefs, but the only other one which you need bother about is the bass clef, which is written thus :—

Ex. 44b 

The lines and spaces have different names in the bass stave, and although you are not likely to be called upon to sing from the bass stave it would be as well to be familiar with the names of the lines and spaces. They are :—

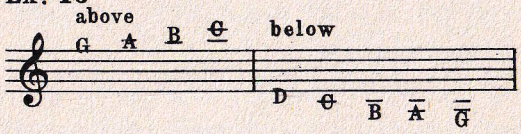
Ex. 45



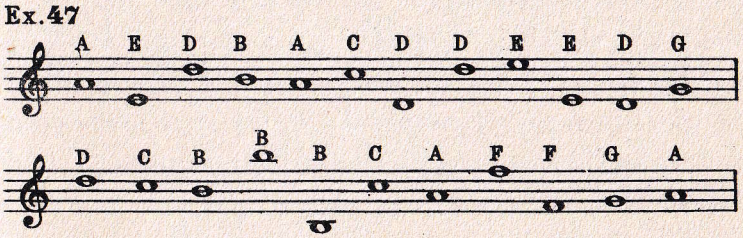
The ordinary stave is not large enough to carry all the notes which are required, so extra lines are used, called leger lines. Here are the principal leger

lines above and below the treble stave. Note that not only have the lines names, but also the spaces in between them.

Ex. 46



It is essential that you know the names of all lines and spaces, and here is a quick way of teaching yourself. Get some manuscript paper (from any music shop) and write out notes at random, naming them and writing in the names as you go. Thus :—

Ex. 47

Cover two or three pages with this sort of thing and you will find that you know the names pretty well. You should, by the way, get someone to check up your work.

It will help enormously if you also play these notes on the piano after you have written them out.

Do not worry about any tempo, just play the notes as you find them. Do *not* attempt to sing them, but try to get the sound of the notes fixed in your head. Just pick out the notes with one finger—do not attempt to add any accompaniment, even if you can play the piano.

If, by the way, you have not even the slightest knowledge of the piano keyboard, get a knowledgable friend to show you where the notes are. Although it is by no means necessary for you to be a pianist it is going to be very essential for you to be able to pick out with one finger the exercises and examples I am going to give you later, in order to teach your ear the sound of them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Key and Scales

ANY of the notes I gave you in the previous chapter can be sharpened or flattened a half-note.

The black note on the piano which is immediately *below* any white note is the " flat " of that note.

The black note immediately *above* any white note is the " sharp " of that note.

You will notice that each black note, since it has a white note on either side of it, can be both a sharp and a flat. Thus, A flat is precisely the same note as G sharp. A moment's experiment with the piano keyboard will make this quite clear.

But certain white notes, you will observe, have no black notes between them. The E and F ; and the B and C. That is because these notes are only a half-note's (or semitone's) distance away. Thus, to lower C a semitone brings us to B. C flat, therefore, is the same note as B. Likewise B sharp is the same as C. And E sharp is the same as F ; and F flat is the same as E.

When the same note has more than one name these are called enharmonic names. Thus G flat is an enharmonic name for F sharp, and so on.

These are the signs which are put before notes to indicate whether they are flattened or sharpened:—

flat = ♭ *sharp* = ♯

When a note is to be lowered two semitones, a double-flat sign is used, and when it is to be raised two semitones a double-sharp sign is used ; thus :—

double flat = 𝄫 *double sharp* = 𝄪

Any of these flat, sharp, double-flat, or double-sharp signs are corrected by a natural sign, which restores the note to its original pitch. Notes which are neither flattened nor sharpened are usually spoken of as being natural. This is a natural sign :—

natural = ♮

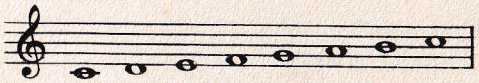
This brings us to the study of scales and keys, about which much could be said. I have decided, however, to say as little as possible, even at the risk of leaving unsaid some of those things which the pupil may prefer to know. I feel, however, that at this point the student might easily tire if too much theory is stuffed down his throat, and that would be fatal, for he would be tempted to " skip " theory altogether, without which he will never be a competent vocalist.

Scales then, can be described briefly as a series of eight notes, starting from a certain note (the key note) and ascending in a set pattern. Owing to the fact that the key note is changed, and that the white notes are not always the same in order (*i.e.*, because of the semitone's distance between the B and the C, and the E and the F) it is necessary to flatten or sharpen certain of the white notes.

These flats or sharps occur regularly throughout the piece (unless specifically cancelled by a natural sign) and are therefore transferred to the beginning of the piece in the form of a " key signature " in order to save continually repeating the sharp or flat signs.

For instance, the scale of C, which starts on C (any C) has no flats or sharps and therefore an " open " key signature, thus :—

Ex. 48



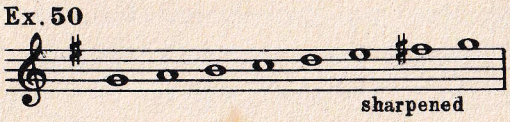
The scale of F, however, starts on F and always has the B (every B) flattened, so that a flat sign appears in the key signature, thus :—

Ex. 49

flattened

Again, the scale of G starts on G and has the F sharpened, with the sharp sign therefore transferred to the key signature, thus :—

Ex. 50



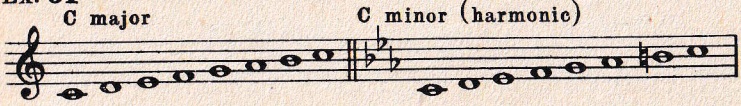
All scales constructed on that pattern are called *major* scales.

There is also another kind of scale, known as the minor scale, which varies from the major in that it is constructed on a different pattern. There is no need to go into the complicated details of whys and wherefores. A demonstration on the piano will show far more clearly than any words the difference between major and minor scales.

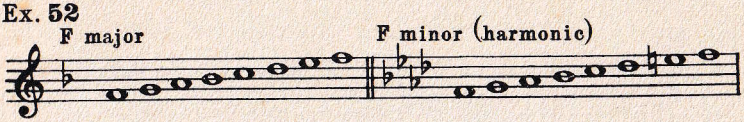
There are two kinds of minor scales, the harmonic and the melodic, and the latter has the peculiarity of changing its form for descending from that for ascending.

I append herewith a complete list of all the scales, major and harmonic minor. Later we will return to these a great deal, because practically all your exercises will be based on these scales. So it is to your advantage to practice them now.

Ex. 51



Ex. 52



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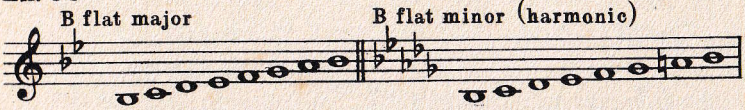
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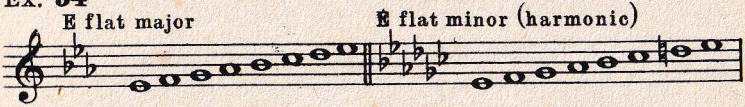
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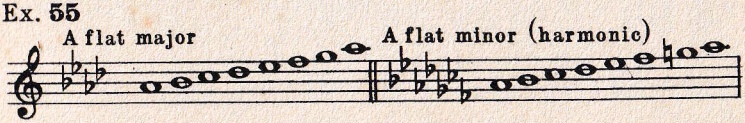
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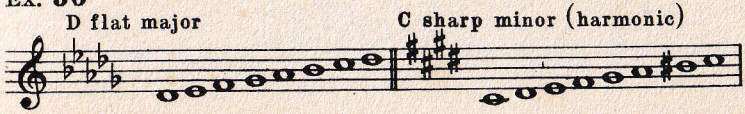
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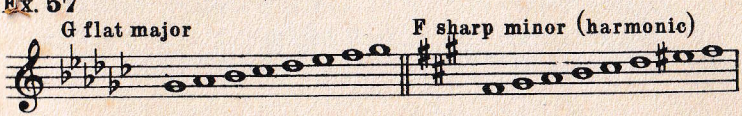
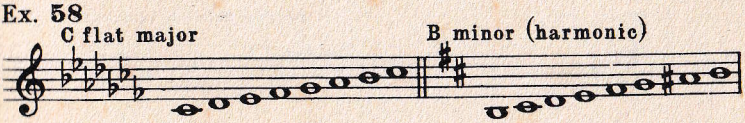
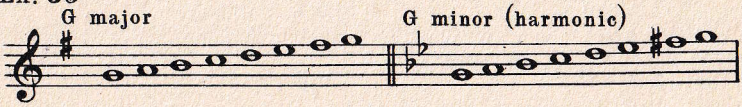


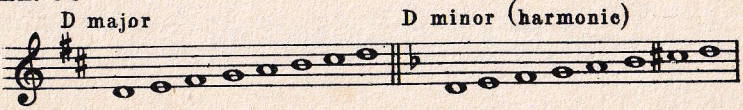
Ex. 58



Ex. 59



Ex. 60



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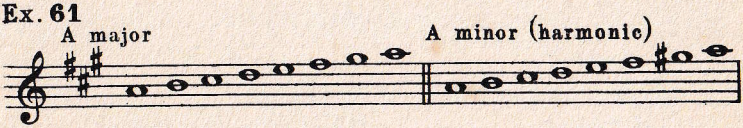
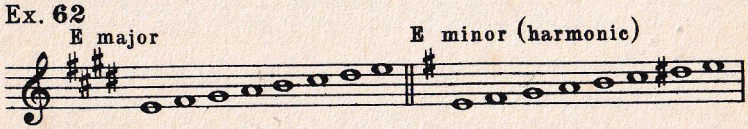
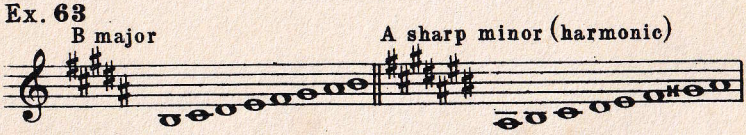
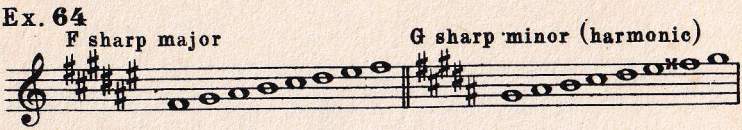

Ex. 62



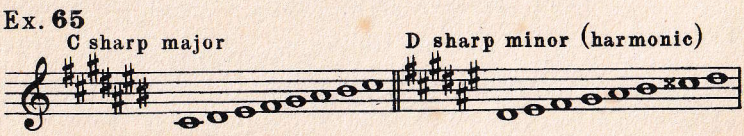
Ex. 63



Ex. 64



Ex. 65



Keep playing these over and over again on the piano, so that the ear gets accustomed to the different sounds of them. In particular must you learn the sound of the major scale, for most of your subsequent practice will be built on and around it.

Although it is not necessary for you to learn all the extreme scales, play them over, slowly, on the piano, in order that you may observe how the *pattern* of the scale remains the same, regardless of what note it starts on.

This is the basis of tonic sol-fa, which is a system of notation using the sounds *doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, te, doh,* instead of the eight notes of the ordinary staff notation, the main difference being that *doh* can be made the first note of *any* scale. It is not a system I would advise for the professional singer, since his work will lie mostly amongst musicians who use the staff notation exclusively.

CHAPTER NINE

Breathing

THE greatest faults of the untrained singer lie in breathing. It must be borne in mind that breath is taken into the body primarily to supply oxygen to the heart and lungs. Normal respiration allows for this and this only. When additional "wind" is required for playing an instrument or singing special methods of inhaling and exhaling have to be adopted.

If they are not, the singer will find himself lamentably short of breath to finish a phrase, necessitating breathing in the wrong places; or, just as bad a mistake, he will find that he has too much breath for his immediate needs, resulting in the forcing of the voice.

A brief explanation of the breathing apparatus of the body will help the reader to understand the right and wrong methods.

The larynx ("Adam's apple") is the voice-box where all the sound is generated. It consists quite

simply of little bits of gristle held together by muscular membranes. Two of these membranes—called the vocal cords—are stretched across the middle of the box, with a slit between them. When the air from the lungs passes up the trachea (windpipe) it has to pass through this slit, and, the membranes being close together and elastic, they vibrate, thus giving rise to sound, in the same way that a violin string, or a saxophone reed, when vibrated, produce their particular sounds.

There are various muscles to control the shape, size and tension of this slit, which thereby alter the tone produced.

But the sound thus produced from the voice box is a very weak and feeble one, and has to be amplified very considerably before it becomes audible.

For this purpose the throat is used as a resonator, and the pharynx (the cavity immediately above the larynx) combines with the mouth and nasal cavities to strengthen and reinforce the sound.

Finally, there is the diaphragm, which is a muscle used to extend the abdomen and expand the lower part of the chest.

There are three methods of breathing. Firstly, the diaphragmatic, which means by the lowering and flattening of the diaphragm. This is sometimes called "deep" breathing, which is a misnomer,

for it is apt to be confused with the " deep breathing " of the physical culture instructor, which calls for bending the head and shoulders back and holding the abdomen in, all of which is absolutely wrong for singing purposes. The proper diaphragmatic deep breathing is, of course, perfectly correct.

The second method is that known as the costal method, which is accomplished by extending the ribs.

Thirdly, there is clavicular breathing, which is accomplished by raising the collar bones and shoulder blades.

Of these three methods the first two are natural and easy, giving power, control, flexibility and good tone.

The third method inhales very little air with a great deal of exertion and gives rise to all kinds of faults, notably quick tiring, forcing, poor attack and general bad tone.

Obviously, therefore, collar-bone breathing should be avoided unless the very maximum amount of breath is needed for some special effort.

Inhalation should be as much as possible through the nose. Inward breathing through the mouth causes dryness of the palate, throat and larnyx, all of which require to be moist to function at their best.

It is not possible to inhale entirely through the nose, but every effort should be made to do so whenever possible. When breathing in through the mouth arch the tongue to the roof of the mouth, as in uttering the vowel sound " ee."

In order to inhale stand upright, erect without being stiff. Hold the head up but guard against constricting the throat muscles in any way, either by holding the head too far back or by thrusting it forward.

Keep the lips and teeth slightly parted, even though you are breathing through the nose. At all costs avoid a noisy intake of breath. It is fatally wrong to " sniff " air in.

Another fault to avoid is clearing the throat with little coughs. If you feel that the throat must be cleared, endeavour to swallow the small collections of mucus which are probably causing the trouble.

Draw the breath in even and steadily, endeavouring to expand the lower ribs and abdomen. It is perhaps almost unnecessary to warn you against tight clothes, either round the chest and abdomen or round the neck.

Having filled the lungs, hold the breath for a few seconds before commencing to exhale. Count four slowly to yourself and then let the air go *suddenly*.

Practise this for a few minutes a day until you can hold the breath *comfortably* (ease is important) for about sixteen seconds.

This and the following exercises should be practised daily, or better still several times daily. It is better to have several short periods than one long one. Only a few minutes, say five, are necessary for each exercise. Practised this way the student will feel an immense amount of additional control over his breath, which will not only benefit his singing enormously but will improve his general physical health.

The next exercise consists of inhaling rapidly, holding the breath for a few seconds and exhaling *slowly*, through either the nose or the mouth.

It is essential that the air be released evenly and gently, and a good way of testing this is to practise close to a lighted candle without disturbing the flame. If a candle is not available hold a strip of thin paper about ten inches in front of the mouth. The exhalation should not cause the flame or the paper to waver.

The third exercise, which should not be attempted until you have made some progress with the first two, consists of inhaling slowly, holding the breath for some seconds (count eight), and then exhaling as gently as in the first exercise.

The fourth exercise, which teaches economy in breath, consists of saying the alphabet steadily and aloud, in one breath. Do not gabble the letters ; such " cheating " is quite pointless and may be damaging. It is not expected that you will be able to enunciate the whole alphabet until after you have practised for a week or two.

CHAPTER TEN

Tone Production

IT is now assumed that the singer is able to breathe with some degree of control—although, of course, do not deceive yourself into believing that it is sufficient just to read through the previous chapter and run over the exercises twice. At least a fortnight must be spent on practising the exercises, and they must be returned to periodically.

Firstly open the mouth slightly—part the teeth enough to allow the insertion of the tip of the forefinger. It is important to remember to keep the tongue as flat as possible, with its tip just touching the lower gums.

Inhale gently and then sing softly, on any note, the vowel sound *ah*, pronounced as the vowel sound in *father*.

The emission of a clear sound will be greatly helped by the use of a good attack. Attack is best practised by closing the lips as if to speak a consonant sound such as *m*. Practise humming the sound *m* with the lips tightly closed. Then open

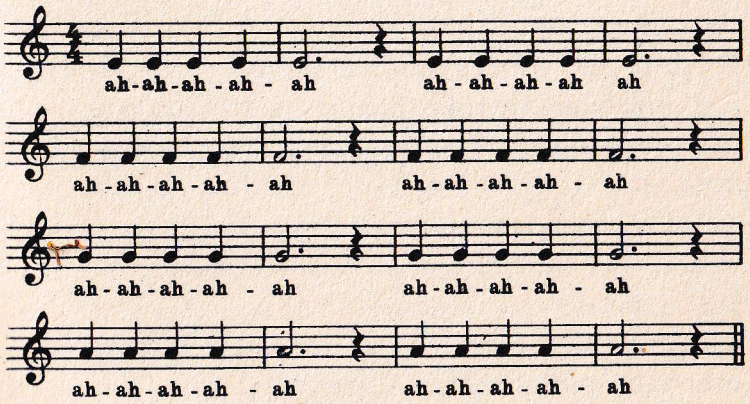
them suddenly to produce the sound *ah*. This should give you a good attack.

Consonants thus produced by the sudden opening of the lips are called labials.

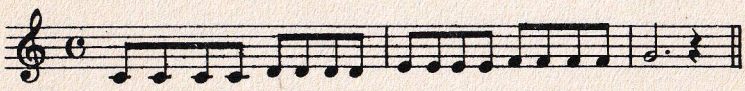
The third part of voice producing is the "release," which means merely the muscular action in releasing the tension on the larynx which was necessary to produce the sound.

This muscular movement is subconscious, and the singer knows only that he forms his mouth in a certain position and wills his voice to come, stopping it also at will. But these instinctive movements can and should be practised in order to acquire rapidity of movement.

Here is an exercise which will help you to acquire the necessary flexibility.

Ex. 66

One of the secrets of good attack is to avoid the emission of any breath at all before the note commences. The sudden escape of air through the tensioned vocal cords causes what is known as the "shock of the glottis" and it is this that gives a good attack. If any air is allowed to escape before the note is sounded there will be no shock of the glottis and consequently no attack.

Once you have mastered Ex. 66, try the next one, which a little more advanced.

Ex. 67

1st time: **ah - ah - ah - ah** ***etc.***
2nd time: **doh-doh-doh-doh** ***etc.***
3rd time: **lay-lay-lay-lay** ***etc.***
4th time: **dee-dee-dee-dee** ***etc.***

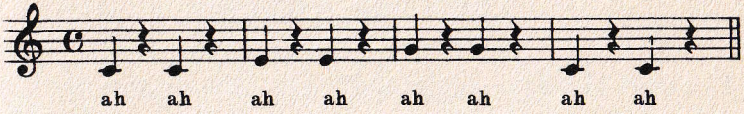
Practise Ex. 67 first with the sound *ah*, then with *doh*, then with *lay*, and finally with *dee*.

In practising these exercises take the greatest care not to force the tone. This is usually the fault of too much air in the lungs. Take in just sufficient to last through the exercises. In time you will learn to judge just the amount of air required, so that at the end of each exercise or passage you have just evacuated the lungs to a degree of

comfort, leaving you with a feeling neither of "holding the breath," nor of "gasping for air."

The next is a particularly good exercise for practising attack and release :—

Ex. 68



Take this exercise at a slow tempo, and inhale slightly at each note. Do not, however, take in so much breath that the lungs become more and more full—take in just sufficient for each note, without forcing or explosiveness. Care must be taken not to overdo the attack so that a hard consonant sound, such as *gah-gah*, is produced.

This shock of the glottis must be utilised very sparingly. There are some schools of thought which are dead against its use in any way, and say that attack should be made in the mouth. But I think that if it is not developed to the state where it becomes almost a cough, no harm will be done.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Long Vowels

I HAVE already explained that the origin of the voice is in the larynx, and that it is amplified by the various resonators such as the pharynx and the mouth.

It is in the resonators (of which there are many component parts) that the voice receives its characteristics.

The larynx merely converts the stream of air into vibrations of air and the primary tone. Resonance, or quality, is known to be the development of the harmonics of this primary tone, and this development is carried out exclusively in the various cavities of the throat and mouth.

Tone quality can only be cultivated by the proper use of these various tone chambers, and by far the best way to learn to control them is through the formation of the vowels.

The movable parts of the resonance cavities, such as the tongue, lips, cheeks, lower jaw, soft palate, and the epiglottis, have all to be trained to

assume and hold the necessary positions for the production of the vowel sounds.

There are six principal vowel sounds. These are called " long " vowels, and we will deal with them first. They are :—

OO as in *too.*
OH as in *go.*
AW as in *law.*
AH as in *father.*
AY as in *gay.*
EE as in *feet.*

The formation of the lips and mouth, together with the lower jaw and tongue, is the essential part of the production of these sounds. There are many " natural " ways of producing them and most of them are wrong.

These are the correct ways :—

OO ; purse the lips, drop the chin so that the teeth are about a finger's thickness apart, and raise the tongue at the back as if for the sound *k*, touch the back of the lower gums lightly with the tip of the tongue.

OH ; round the lips and protrude them slightly, drop the chin so that the teeth are about an inch apart, raise the tongue at the back, but not so much as for *OO*.

AW ; the lips should be widely separated in the centre and rounded at the corners—in an oval, teeth well apart, and tongue depressed as much as possible at the back.

AH ; the lips should be well apart, slightly showing the teeth, which should be the width of two fingers apart, tongue flat with the tip touching the bottom of the front teeth.

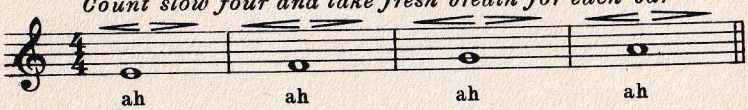
AY ; draw the lips across the teeth, as if smiling, teeth slightly open, and the tongue brought forward with the centre raised.

EE ; lips and teeth less parted than for *AY*, tongue raised close to palate and sides, with tip touching lower gums.

All these vowel sounds should be practised by sustaining long notes. Start each note softly, increase the volume to loud, and decrease to softly again. (Increasing the volume is called *crescendo*, and is indicated by diverging lines ; decreasing the volume is called *decrescendo*, and is indicated by converging lines). Thus :—

Ex. 69

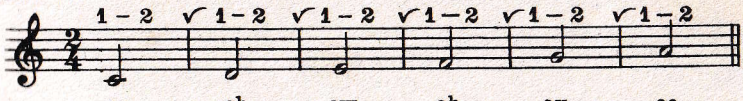
Count slow four and take fresh breath for each bar



Repeat Ex. 69, substituting each of the other long vowel sounds.

Next sing all the long vowels in the form of a short scale, thus :—

Ex. 70



Ticks denote where breath should be taken

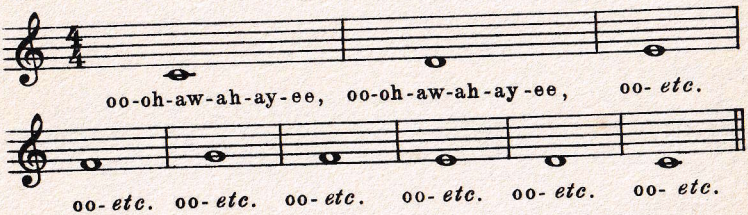
Repeat this exercise several times, counting a slow two-in-a-bar for each note. Take a fresh, but short, breath for each bar and slightly attack each note.

Gradually increase the speed until you can sing the whole exercise in one breath. Take the greatest care not to have to strain for the last notes owing to insufficient breath.

When all the notes are to be sung without a break in this manner, a curved line (called a slur) is placed over the notes to be thus rendered. This is known as *legato, i.e.*, smooth ; when the notes are short and detached they are said to be sung *staccato*.

Next sing one note, changing the vowel sounds on it without changing the pitch or making a fresh attack, thus :—

Ex. 71



There are many other exercises on these long vowels which will no doubt occur to the inventive-minded student. But beware not to stray too far from the patterns I have given you.

One of the greatest dangers against which the beginner has to guard is making these vowels nasal in quality. Experiment with *OO* and you will see how easy it is to pitch the sound either in the mouth or in the nose. The latter, of course, must be avoided at all costs, and once the knack of pitching the *OO* in the mouth is acquired, it is easy enough to pitch the others likewise.

This is a matter of vital importance so watch it carefully. Nothing is worse than a nasal intonation.

The Short Vowels

NEXT we come to the consideration of the short vowels, which are really only adaptations of the long vowels.

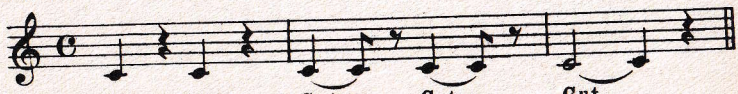
The principal short vowels are :—

U as in *cut.*
A as in *hat.*
E as in *men.*
I as in *hit.*
UO as in *nook* (not as in *fool*).
O as in *pot.*

From the example words given, and the tongue, lip and teeth positions given for the long vowels, you should have no difficulty in enunciating the short vowels.

At first, some difficulty may be experienced in sustaining the short vowels, but a little application to some such exercise as Ex. 72 will soon overcome this difficulty. Substitute for the word "cut" each of the example-words given in the table of short vowels which appears above.

Ex. 72



1st time:	Cut	Cut	Cut	Cut	Cut
2nd time:	Hat	Hat	Hat	Hat	Hat
3rd time:	Men	Men	Men	Men	Men
4th time:	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit
5th time:	Nook	Nook	Nook	Nook	Nook
6th time:	Pot	Pot	Pot	Pot	Pot

Next in this section, we come to the consideration of compound vowels, or dipthongs. These are vowels with a double sound, caused by a movement of the tongue during its formation.

For instance, if you will say the vowel sound in the word "play" slowly, over and over again, you will notice that it is really *ay-ee*. This is a compound or dipthong vowel.

The principal compound vowels are :—

I pronounced as *ah-ee* as in *mind*.

OY pronounced as *aw-ee* as in *boil*.

OU pronounced as *ah-oo* as in *loud*.

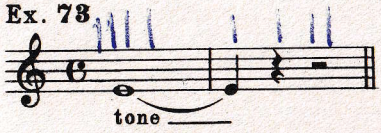
EU pronounced as *ee-oo* as in *few*.

(It will be realised that these phonetic pronunciations are only very approximate, but I feel that they are easier to read than the usual attempts at phonetics with their queer little signs over the vowel-letters in some system which is usually clear only to the inventor of it.)

Practice these compound vowels in exactly the same way as the long vowels and the short vowels. Examples 69 and 70 are particularly suitable. Guard always against the fatal nasal intonation, by pitching the voice in the mouth.

The greatest care must be taken with this and the previous chapter as the enunciation of the vowels is really the basis of good singing. It is in the vowels that the main difference between talking and singing lies.

In speaking, the vowels are not sustained to any extent ; in singing it is the vowels which are sustained to the value of the notes. For instance, in an example such as this :—

Ex. 73

the consonant *t* is pronounced quickly and shortly, and the vowel *o* is sustained throughout the five beats. At the *termination* of the fifth beat (not before) the consonant *n* is sounded, rounding off the vowel sound and releasing the tension of the vocal cords.

All singing tone, therefore, as will be clearly seen, is obtained through the medium of the vowels,

the consonants having little or no vocal tone. Hence the importance of concentrating on the correct production of the vowels, and the necessity for assimilating carefully the contents of these two chapters. To pass over them without properly practising the exercises contained therein is a mere waste of time, and it is idle to proceed further until the student has spent at least half an hour a day for a week or two weeks on all of them.

When singing compound vowels, let the second vowel-sound be sung much quieter than the first, otherwise an entirely artificial and unpleasant effect will be produced and such words as " may " will sound like " may-ee."

There is a tendency in the untrained singer to commence the vocal sound before the mouth has shaped itself for the " resonating " of the sound. This gives to the vowel a broadening effect, such as " moi " for " my " and " main " for " men." The reason for this is that the mouth, teeth and lips are not trained to take up their necessary formation with sufficient quickness. This defect can only be overcome by the practice of such exercises as have been given in this chapter.

These exercises can be amplified by standing in front of a mirror and *silently* forming the mouth into the shapes necessary for the six long vowels,

the six short vowels and the four diphthongs. Watch the formations of the lips and teeth, and try to see the shape of the tongue by opening the mouth every now and then when the tongue is in position. This will help to fix in the mind the necessary muscular actions.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Consonants

CONSONANTS are nothing more than noises. There can be no tone in them, and it is impossible to sing a consonant sound.

Broadly speaking the consonants are those letters of the alphabet which are not vowels, such as *b*, *c*, *d*, *f*, etc.

Although they can have no musical tone the clear enunciation of the consonants is what makes for clear diction in singing. In the way that vowels are wholly responsible for the *tone* of the voice, so are consonants wholly responsible for the clarity of the sung words.

Many singers, especially of the "straight" variety, concentrate so much on the important vowel-tones that they neglect their consonants. How many times have we all heard concert singers (and even the better class opera singer) singing away with bell-like clarity of tone, but with not a distinguishable word! This is due to nothing but bad consonants.

To a dance band singer, who has to put over the words of the lyric at all costs, diction is of terrific importance. It cannot be overstressed.

More dance band vocalists are "killed" through their bad enunciation than through any other reason. Remember, most of the people who listen to dance band singers are not trained to observe the niceties of voice production. Thus, even if a singer is producing marvels with his larynx, the average listener will grumble "he's no good—you can't hear a word he says."

Therefore pay every attention to what is going to be said in this chapter. For upon your consonants depends whether you are contemptuously labelled as a "wordless singer."

The proper use of consonants may be called articulation, for it *commences* the sound.

Here are the principal consonant sounds :—

l, m, n, r, ng ...	These are called "liquids," or semi-vowels, because they are preceded by a short vowel sound.
h wh	These are called aspirates, and depend on a sudden exhalation of air, having no form of their own until used in conjunction with a vowel sound.

g (hard), *k*, *c* (hard) *d*, *t*, *d*, *t*, *b*, *p*, *q*.	These are the mutes, so called because their accompanying vowel sounds are entirely checked.
f, *v*, *th* (as in "this"), *th* (as in "thin"), *c*, (soft), *s*, *z*, *g* (soft) *j*, *ch* (soft), *sh*, *zh*.	These are called the semi-mutes, or spirants, because their accompanying vowel sounds are partly prolonged.
x (as in "tax").	Called a compound mute.

Consonants have no vocal sound, but at the beginning of a word they must be made audible before the voice is produced.

In the middle of a word the voice must be temporarily interrupted in order that the lips, tongue and teeth may produce their independent sounds.

And at the end of a word they must be sounded when the vowel-voice has ceased.

For instance :—

faith should be sung as *f-ai-th*

faithful should be sung as *f-ai-thf-ul*

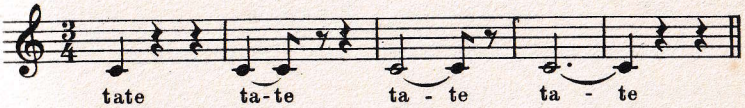
wherefore should be sung *wh-ere-f-ore*

Failure to break off the voice to allow these consonant sounds to be heard results in a forced, laboured and unnatural tone.

It is essential that both initial and final consonants should be uttered with the utmost clearness. Never trail off at the end of a word, so that "lie" is sung instead of "light," or "way" instead of "weight," and so on. This is a very common fault and one which should be guarded against by emphasizing all final consonants, even to the extent of apparently over-emphasizing them.

Particularly is this necessary at the end of long notes, and the singer must always bear in mind that final consonants must be emphasized far more in singing than they are in speech. Particular attention must be paid to *t*, *b*, *p*, *d*, *k*, *th* and *ng*.

The best way to practise this is by singing words which have a long vowel sound terminated by a consonant. Thus :—

Ex. 74

Many of these consonants are woefully mistreated. One of the most ill-used is *ng*, which in such words as "ringing" is distorted so that the word sounds like "rin-in." In this case the final *g* is omitted altogether, but it is just as bad to over-emphasize it so that the word becomes "ringging," with the second *g* very hard. The third form

of mistake usually associated with the *ng* consonant is to add to it a final *k*, so that " nothing " becomes " nothingk," which is very bad indeed.

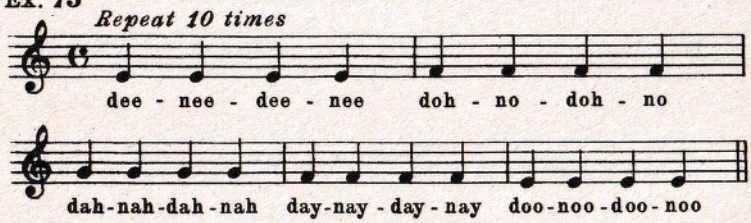
This sound of *ng* frequently gives trouble to the untrained singer on account of its nasal quality. Similarly with *m* and *n*. This is due to insufficient control of the soft palate, which is the back part of the roof of the mouth.

Everyone has noticed that there is a tendency, when suffering from a cold in the head, to speak in a nasal tone and alter *n* into *d*, and *m* into *b*, so that " Mary's mother has ninety-nine mats " becomes " Bary's bother has didety-dide bats."

This is because the cold in the head is preventing the soft palate from functioning properly, and is *closing the soft palate improperly*. What is usually known as speaking through the nose is, in point of fact, *not* speaking through the nose.

Should you feel that your tone is too nasal, practice this exercise :—

Ex. 75



Variations on the above exercise can be easily invented. The idea should be to alternate between the hard and soft *n* and *d* ; also *m* and *b*.

Control of the soft palate will also be helped by opening the mouth widely, inhaling quickly (when the palate will rise), holding the tongue flat, and exhaling through the nose (when the palate drops). Practise this in front of a mirror, so that you can see for yourself the action of the palate.

Practise this for five minutes daily in order to harden the palate, which, when accomplished, will give a considerably brighter tone and much greater ease over the nasal consonants.

The sibilant consonants, *s* and *z*, give trouble to some people. Those who cannot pronounce them clearly are said to lisp, the most common form of which is the substitution of *th* for *s*. This is caused by placing the tip of the tongue too far forward, and almost touching the teeth.

The aspirates, *h* and *wh*, give trouble to many people, particularly *wh*, which is often pronounced as *w*, omitting the *h* altogether. In aspirating these consonants do not breathe too heavily, otherwise such small words as " his " and " her " will be over-emphasized.

The *wh* is often aspirated before the vowel *e*. For instance, do not pronounce " when " as

" wen." On the other hand it must not be over-aspirated so as to produce something like " wer-hen."

The soft *th* (as in " thin ") causes trouble to some people, who produce an *f* sound by raising the lower lip so that it touches the upper teeth. The *th* should be produced by the tongue very lightly touching the upper front teeth and protruding ever so slightly beyond them. Guard against such mistakes as " free " for " three," etc.

The hard *th* (as in " then ") is sometimes distorted into *v*, making " with " into " wiv." This is more through carelessness than any physical defect, because such people who make this error usually have no difficulty with the hard *th* when it is at the beginning of a word such as "those."

One of the greatest traps for the unwary, or the careless, or the lazy, is what is known as the re-duplicated consonants. For instance, in a passage with two words such as " Take a shrewd aim," unless the consonant at the end of " shrewd " is very clearly finished, and a fractional pause made, some such ludicrous and wholly unwanted effect may occur, such as " Take a shrew dame."

Always finish off the final consonants clearly and decisively before starting the next word. As I have said before, they can afford to be slightly

exaggerated. But do not over do this so that all the words are disconnected and a sentence no more than a series of over-emphasized consonants.

Watch carefully for any risk of words running into each other in this way, and avoid doing so by making the slightest pauses between the dangerous words. With most of the words, of course, there is no such danger.

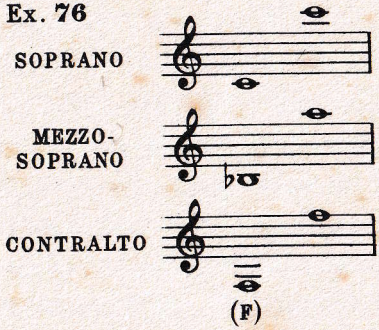
Finally, the sibilants, which are supposed to give so much trouble to recorders and broadcasters by their tendency to " hiss." I have found that this is caused by over-anxiety on the part of the vocalist to stress his final consonants, resulting in saying something like " success-s-s-s." Avoid doing this, and you will have no trouble with your sibilants. Do not fall into the trap, either, of *under*-voicing them. Just give them their full clear value, as you would if you were talking slowly and clearly.

This sibilants business is a well-known " frightener " for newcomers to the microphone, but it is mostly without foundation. Do not let it alarm you.

Compass of the Voices

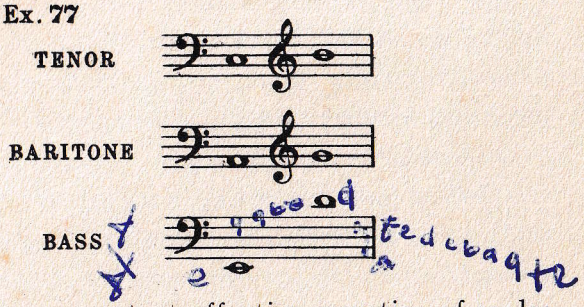
MOST would-be singers have only the vaguest ideas, usually, as to whether their voice is tenor or baritone, contralto or soprano. As a rule, they go no further than a nondescript " high " or " low."

Women's voices are divided into three categories :—

Ex. 76

In each case a range of approximately two octaves (an octave is eight notes) is given. This is the range of a well-trained singer, and it is not expected that the beginner will be able to sing effectively in a range of more than an octave and

a half. This applies also to the masculine registers. Most popular songs are written within a range of an octave and a half.

The men's voices are :—

Ex. 77

Before you can start effective practice of scales, etc., it is obviously necessary for you to discover in what register your voice lies. That is why I have kept the few exercises I have given you so far confined to a few notes in a middle register.

Of the women's voices the contralto is definitely the most popular for dance work for the singing of modern " torch " songs, although exactly why this should be so it would be difficult to say. Nevertheless, those with naturally high-pitched voices need not despair, for range can be extended by practice, and one never knows when there might be a sudden veering round in fashion to high sopranos. In any case the higher voices are absolutely essential for trio and quartet singing.

Of the men's voices the tenor is the most popular, and the most usual amongst crooners. I think, however, that this is due more to coincidence than anything else. The only other reason that I can think of is that most numbers are written in the range of the average tenor, but this is not very important since most bands have special arrangements in which the vocal chorus could be transposed to any desired key.

When experimenting to discover exactly what your voice is, do not be misled by the mere question of the notes (either upwards or downwards) that you can reach. It is far more important to consider the *quality* of the notes sung. For instance, if you find that the last few notes of, say, the tenor range are thin and difficult to obtain, then obviously it is better to sing in the baritone range. This applies to both extremes of the compass and to all voices. *Quality* is the deciding factor, not *pitch*.

In deciding which is your best voice, it is essential to " place " it—that is to cause the sound to be resonated in the right place. Without doing this there is a danger of imagining yourself to possess a range which you have not, and consequently practising in your wrong register, obviously with disastrous results. Practising a voice which has been wrongly " placed " is likely to ruin it for ever.

In this "placing" the voice should not be felt in the throat, for then it will be throaty; nor must it be felt in the cheeks, for this will make it thick; and most important of all, it must not be felt in the nose, otherwise the voice will be nasal—a common fault with singers of some legitimate Continental schools.

The sound must be pitched above the front teeth, in order that it shall vibrate properly in all the resonating cavities. When the voice is properly placed a distinct vibration will be felt across the bridge of the nose. Do not try to force this vibration into being by singing through the nose—at *all* costs that must be avoided.

The falsetto is a trick which is occasionally useful but should be used very sparingly. It is accomplished by a sudden, sharp shock of the glottis (previously described) and has a totally different quality from the other registers of the voice. It is, of course, confined to the register which is above that of the normal voice. Its principal use to us is as a final high and quiet note at the end of a song. Never use vibrato with falsetto, by the way.

The true falsetto note can usually be distinguished by the fact that it is nearly impossible to *crescendo* and *diminuendo* on it.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Registers

ONCE having decided which is your particular voice, the next procedure is to cultivate it in its different registers. All voices have different registers —some say three, others say two only. It is simpler for my purpose if we follow the latter school of thought.

The first or lower register is the " chest voice." This is the full, natural voice. It should be used with the open throat—that is, with the kind of tone produced in singing *ah*. The upper part of the chest voice, however, is better with the closed voice —the tone produced in singing *o*. The open notes of the upper chest registers are harsh and unpleasant.

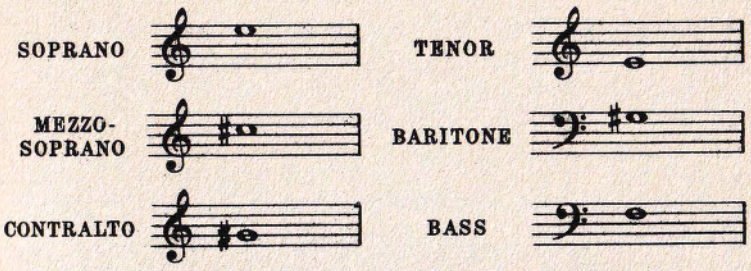
In singing in the chest voice the breath must be aimed through the mouth without striking against the roof.

This is greatly facilitated by opening the mouth as widely as possible.

At the top of the comfortable chest register there occurs the " break," when the type of voice has to be changed in order to continue upwards.

The break usually occurs in the following places :—

Ex. 78



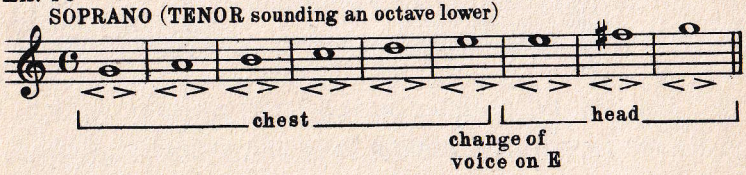
The second register is the head register, which, as its name implies, means that the voice is pitched in the head resonating chambers, and the vibratory sensation is experienced at its strongest.

In this register the tongue, particularly the root, should be kept as low as possible. This will help greatly to avoid the dreadful nasal tone which so many singers produce through wrongly directing their voice.

So much for the two registers. The great difficulty in singing of all kinds is to unite them so that the change from one to the other is imperceptible. There must not be a sudden change in tone quality between the upper notes of the chest register and the lower notes of the head register. One of the great secrets of singing is to have even control over the entire range.

The best way to cover the break is to practise changing from chest to head on the note of the break. Sing a scale, each note *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, up as far as the chest voice will comfortably go. Then on that note, change to the head voice and continue upwards. Thus :—

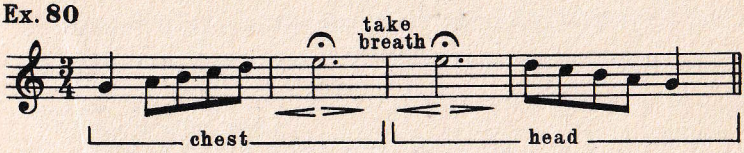
Ex. 79



Practise this kind of exercise diligently, using the vowel sounds *ay* and *ee* alternatively. In singing in the head register a nasal intonation will be avoided by using a more closed vowel, such as *aw*.

Do not force the voice in the *crescendos*, and take the greatest care that the voice does not crack into a falsetto.

Ex. 80 is a good exercise for improving the break. The first part is sung upwards in the chest voice ; the top note is held (hence the curved sign over it, which is a "pause") *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, and the descending scale is sung in the *head* voice. This is very difficult to do, and will call for a great deal of practice.

Ex. 80

Although the note E has been taken as being the break note in these exercises, the student must decide for himself whether this is the best for him on which to change from chest to head registers.

Also, singers whose voices are in neither the soprano nor the tenor compasses must adapt these exercises to their particular range.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

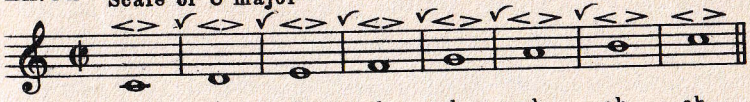
Tone Practice

IT is advisable to practise every day, preferably in the morning and in a well-ventilated room. Do not try to force the voice by over-practice—it cannot be rushed and such misplaced enthusiasm can ruin what chances the singer might have of cultivating a good voice.

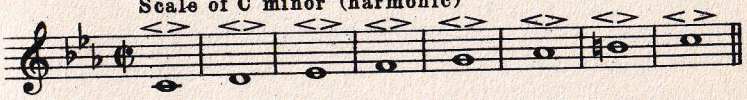
First of all close the mouth, then inhale a deep slow breath through the nostrils. (Breathing through the nostrils, by the way, both filters and warms the air.) Hold the air in the lungs for a second or two, then exhaust the air slowly through the nose or mouth. Practise this for five minutes every day—remembering all that I have told you earlier in this book about correct breathing.

Practise all the major and harmonic minor scales given to you in Chapter 8 on all the vowel sounds given in Chapter 11—that comprises enough exercises to last you for a long time!

In case you are not quite clear as to my meaning, here are two " sample " exercises :—

Ex.81 **Scale of C major**

1st time:	ah	ah	ah	ah	ah	ah	ah	ah
2nd time:	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo
3rd time:	oh	oh	oh	oh	oh	oh	oh	oh
4th time:	aw	aw	aw	aw	aw	aw	aw	aw
5th time:	ay	ay	ay	ay	ay	ay	ay	ay
6th time:	ee	ee	ee	ee	ee	ee	ee	ee

Ex. 82

Scale of C minor (harmonic)

1st:	ah	*etc.*
2nd:	oo	*etc.*
3rd:	oh	*etc.*
4th:	aw	*etc.*
5th:	ay	*etc.*
6th:	ee	*etc.*

When changing from one vowel to another do not move the jaw up and down, neither shoot it forward nor draw it back to obtain low notes.

Remember to keep the tongue as flat as possible, using only the tip for the different vowel sounds. If the tongue is allowed to " fatten " during the production of a note the voice will be rendered thick.

Practise all these exercises standing up, in an erect but not stiff position. It is essential to use a piano as a guide in the scales. At first it will be found advisable to strike every note of the scale before it is sung. Subsequently, however, it will be sufficient to strike only the first note of the whole scale.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Vibrato and Intonation

OF all the possible faults perhaps none is so offensive as a bad vibrato. To have to listen to a constant " bleating " is a trial for the nerves which few can survive without making some devastating remarks about singing in general and the offending singer in particular. Untrained singers suffer badly, as a rule, from over-vibrato.

Certain schools of " straight " singing prohibit its use altogether ; others admit that it might be useful occasionally. To my mind, a gentle vibrato is an asset always in the singing of dance tunes and ballads. After all, most of these songs are sentimental to the point of bathos and if those are the songs we have to sing then let us sing them appropriately, with the exaggerated feeling that a vibrato gives. It is no use attempting to give an American slang lyric and a syncopated alla-breve tune the same treatment as an operatic aria.

Vibrato is an undulating movement of the breath, and is, in point of fact, a slight flattening

and sharpening of the primary note. Its object is to give " warmth " to the hard clarity of the unwavering tone.

It is accomplished by a muscular movement of the throat, which, unless carefully controlled, can very easily become too fast and too deep. The waves must be slow and even, and the changing of pitch must be of the very slightest. The best way to practise vibrato is on long notes, using the various vowels, *but without crescendo and diminuendo.*

Some singers have what they call a " natural " vibrato. The sooner they get rid of it the better, since as a rule it is usually no more than a series of rapid gasps for breath, which can never be controlled into a proper vibrato because it is produced by entirely the wrong method.

Other causes for a " natural " vibrato are fatigue, wrong placing of the voice, or an elongated uvula. (The uvula is the conical appendage that can be seen hanging down from the soft palate at the opening of the throat. If this is too large there is nothing to be done about it except to seek medical advice.)

Owing to this wrong placing of the voice the position of the note within the mouth will vary, with the fatal result of bad intonation, *i.e.*, singing out of tune.

Bad intonation is a very serious fault, and it is difficult to know what to advise about it The causes are well known, and consequently the remedies. But the trouble is that the *singer never knows* when he or she is singing out of tune—otherwise obviously he or she would not do it.

It is a strange thing that some vocalists, whilst able to detect the slightest inaccuracy of intonation in others, fail absolutely to notice their own shortcomings. This is not so much conceit as a kind of musical " deaf spot."

The only thing to do is to ask, and take, the candid opinion of someone competent to criticise. Should you be told (reliably) that you are singing out of tune, it should be easy enough to concentrate on the known causes and endeavour to rectify them.

Some of the best known reasons for flat singing are :—incorrect breathing, bad position of the body or head resulting in cramping the throat or lungs, taking the chest register too high, want of fresh air, a badly ventilated or stuffy room, moist atmosphere, attempting to sing with the voice tired, or with a sore throat, or, finally, just plain carelessness.

The remedies (if any) for most of the foregoing are obvious. Otherwise bear in mind that firmness in sending out the voice, tenacity in holding it,

a controlled vibrato, and the correct placing are all factors that will rapidly cure bad intonation. A useful exercise in this respect is to inhale slowly, hold the breath and then exhale suddenly.

On rare occasions there is a tendency to sing sharp (*i.e.*, above the note). This can be due only to wrong placing of the voice or to straining to reach notes which are really too high for your voice, or the particular register you are using. Again the remedies are obvious. An exercise that will help to overcome this is to inhale slowly, hold the breath, and then exhale slowly.

The best practice for intonation is to sing scales both up and down, on the vowels, *the first note only* being struck on the piano. Once you find that there is no wavering in pitch on one up-and-down scale, extend the exercise to take in several runs up and down, sounding the piano note on only the first and last notes of the exercise.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Flexibility

FLEXIBILITY is the ability to sing rapid passages with clearness and without slurring from one note to the other. It is accomplished only by practice and there is no " short cut."

It is better to practise first with the head voice, as this is lighter and more easily manoeuvred.

All flexibility exercises should be practised on *ah*, except perhaps for the very high notes, when *oh* can be substituted. Commence slowly, and sing each exercise over several times before proceeding to the next.

A metronome will be of great value in flexibility exercises. (In case you don't know, I will explain that a metronome is a clockwork device with a pendulum which rocks to and fro with a loud tick. The pendulum has a movable weight on it, which controls the speed of the ticking.) By setting the metronome at a very slow speed for the first attempts at the exercises, and then subsequently increasing the speed of the pendulum, you will be able to check your progress. But do not increase the speed

until you are quite sure that you have mastered the exercise at that speed.

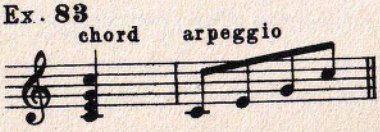
Use one tick for each beat of the bar ; thus, if the exercise is in four-four time set the pendulum at, say, 52, and allow a tick for each beat, four ticks to the bar.

The movement between the notes must be clear and light. At no time must there be any suggestion of gliding from one note to the other. A slight attack for each note will facilitate this.

Some of the exercises which follow have been written in arpeggio form, and it is these which require especial care in the avoidance of the annoying trick of " sliding " from one to the next.

Let me explain briefly the meaning of the words chord, arpeggio and interval.

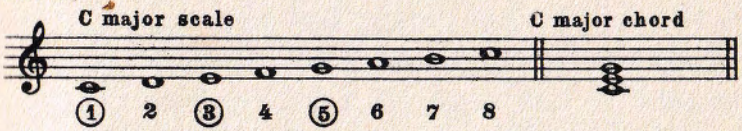
A chord is two or more notes sounded together. An arpeggio is the notes of a chord sounded one after the other, thus :—

Ex. 83

There are many kinds of chords, but they are all formed from the notes of the scale from which they are taken. Although a knowledge of chords and chord construction is useful to any instrumentalist or vocalist I do not think that the latter

requires it so much that I can afford to devote much space to it. Nor do I advise the singer to cram his mind with the theory and practice of chords until he is far more advanced than this book will take him.

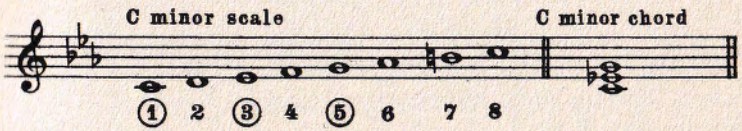
Sufficient is it to say that the principal chords are the major, minor, augmented, diminished and seventh. The major is taken from the first, third and fifth degrees of the scale of the key, thus :—

Ex. 84



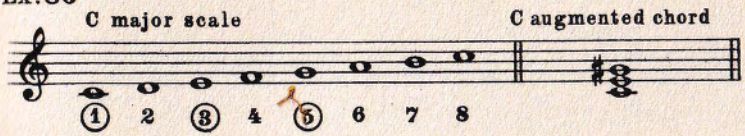
The minor is the same except that the third degree is flattened, thus :—

Ex. 85



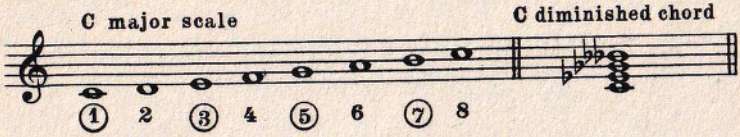
The augmented chord is also taken from the first, third and fifth degrees of the scale, but has its fifth degree sharpened, thus :—

Ex. 86



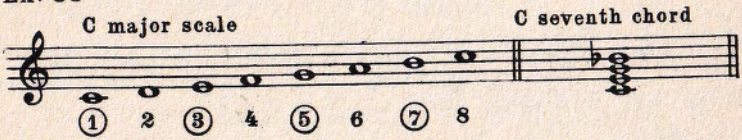
The diminished chord is taken from the first, third, fifth, and seventh degrees of the scale, and has the third flattened, the fifth flattened, and the seventh doubly flattened, thus :—

Ex. 87



The seventh chord is also taken from the major scale and consists of the first degree, the third, the fifth, and the seventh, which is flattened, thus :—

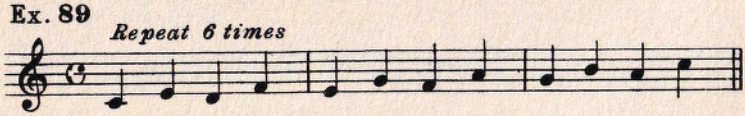
Ex. 88



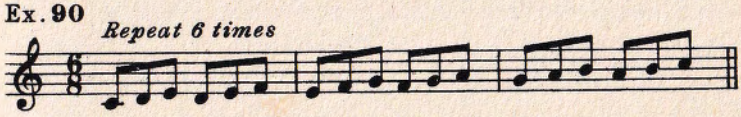
This, by the way, is frequently called the dominant seventh chord, when the bottom note of the chord is the fifth degree of a scale. Thus the chord in Ex. 88 is the dominant seventh chord *in* F, as well as being the seventh chord *on* C.

From these chords can be constructed some flexibility exercises such as the next three :—

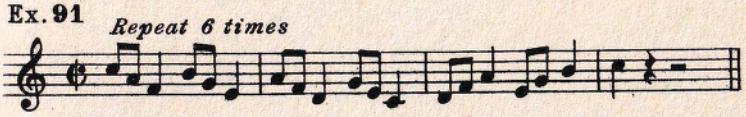
Ex. 89



Ex. 90

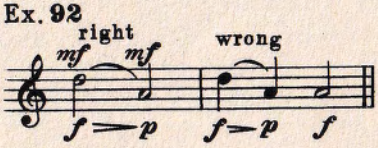


Ex. 91



I have warned you against sliding from one note to the next. Nevertheless, there is a legitimate use for this, when it is called *portamento*. Very occasionally it may be effective to glide from one note to the next. Exactly when and where can depend only on the good taste of the singer.

When *portamento* is attempted, the glide should be much quieter than either of the principal notes. Start the slide almost at the end of the first note, and time it so that the second note is reached dead on the beat. Thus :—

Ex. 92

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Modern Style

WHY is it that many singers, even expert and well-trained ones, are no good as dance band vocalists ? Even when they master the art of whispering into the microphone, they are as far away as ever from what is required. There always seems to be something missing.

That intangible " something " is what students of dance music call " style," and without it a singer is doomed to failure as a singer of modern dance tunes.

It is practically impossible to describe just what this style is, because it is made up of many things, tricks and habits which in themselves are negligible, but which combine to make all the world of difference between " straight " and dance-style singing.

There is, for instance, the use of the microphone, amplifying the voice as it does, and giving the singer much greater practicable range. Many singers, unless they have had years of training and intensive practice, find that the top notes of their

chest register are round and clear but of little volume. Any endeavour to make them strong enough for concert-hall purposes forces them beyond the power of the vocal cords, with consequent loss of their best and only virtue—sweetness.

The microphone, however, with its magic, makes those soft high notes as loud as necessary. And, of course, this applies to the entire range of the voice. Forcing is wholly unnecessary, and every effort can be concentrated on the quality of the voice rather than the quantity. An entirely different voice-quality is the result.

This is but one of the differences between " straight " and dance-style singers. Many vocalists of legitimate training do not seem to be able to grasp that it is not necessary (or even advisable) to sing loudly into a microphone.

This whispering, therefore, is one of the first things that a would-be modern-style singer should cultivate.

But what, you will ask, if I do not get a microphone into which to sing ? How then ?

That is a difficult question to answer, because really, the whole art of modern singing depends on the microphone. Without electrical amplification one has to revert to the straight methods of voice production in order to be heard at all, thereby

losing much if not all of the crooning quality. The only alternative, in these circumstances, is a megaphone.

I am not over fond of a megaphone, although I find it necessary to use one from time to time. In the first place it is apt to distort the voice ; secondly, it is very " directional " —by which I mean that unless the megaphone is directed straight at a listener he will hear nothing but a muffled, wordless sound ; thirdly, it hides the face—and, whatever one might be tempted to say about this being an advantage, it is not, because it is impossible to express any sort of personality if one's face is replaced by a large black gaping hole !

Without a microphone, crooning is no longer characteristic, although I have tried singing without artificial aid in large theatres and so on, and been assured that I was audible at the back of the hall. Nevertheless, the voice loses that intimacy which is so essential a part of this kind of singing.

That, then, is one of the differences between the "straight " and the dance-style methods of singing.

The other is just—" style."

If you do not understand what this means, let me try to explain it by saying that it lies in expressing the singer's (or instrumentalist's) personality in his

rendering, so that it is at once wholly original and yet along accepted lines of what is considered *right* style in the dance music sense.

There are many subtle variations—a little dragging behind the tempo here, a little hurrying there. A slight *portamento*, an added grace note, a fresh attack, an exaggerated attack, and so on. A favourite trick is to hold a principal note for longer than its written value and then to hurry the remaining notes of the bar in order to get back into tempo. Needless to say, this calls for considerable experience and exquisite taste, otherwise it becomes merely absurd and objectionable.

It is rash to attempt to define this intangible " style " in a few words, yet I will attempt to do so by saying that it consists mostly of altering the values of the notes and embellishing the tune without upsetting the original rhythm or the melody.

That seems vague, enough, I admit, but it is the nearest I can get to a definition. There is a great deal more to it than merely altering the note values, but that is the basis of it.

But—and here is the most important point of all—the alterations must be done to conform with the prevailing mode of alterations.

It must be explained that these thousand and one tricks have been evolved slowly and one by one

by dance musicians and singers. And these tricks and mannerisms are constantly being modified, improved, or dispensed with altogether and new ones added.

Exactly who is the arbiter of these changes it is impossible to say—but changes there certainly are, and any player or singer who is not *au fait* with the latest developments is regarded as an also-ran. He is derisively characterised as being " cornfed "—" corny "—musician's slang suggesting the unsophisticated and out-of-date. If he is so designated it will be an uphill task to live down that reputation, and until he does he will be greatly disadvantaged.

I know that a thousand examples will immediately spring to mind of singers of popular songs (we can exclude the " straight " singers altogether for the moment) who, although undeniably " corny," have sailed to fame and fortune. The complete answer to that, of course, is that it was not their singing which put them there. In most cases it was personality, or some mannerism which caught the public's fancy.

CHAPTER TWENTY

How to Acquire Style

THE ordinary beginner, struggling to get a start, has to seek the favour of dance band leaders and the like, most of whom, although many of them will not admit it, are influenced to a great deal by the possession or otherwise of this thing called " style."

The only way to acquire it is to listen constantly (and intelligently) to those who are recognised experts at it. It is seldom practicable to listen to them in person, but there is always the radio and the gramophone.

The gramophone—particularly if it is an electrically-amplifying one—is the greatest educator the would-be style singer can have. For only by listening over and over again to the best type of records, or by mixing with the best type of dance musician, will style ever be acquired.

I will not attempt to recommend any particular records—or even any particular artist. Any records which might be considered the last word in modernity to-day, may (and probably will) be considered most *demodé* twelve months hence.

The only solution is to listen to the best types of records continually. Get the *new* records of those artists recognised as being "stylish." Even one a month will be a handsome education, and surely cannot be considered expensive. Play it over and over again, listen to the singer's method of rendering the tune—the slight alterations he makes in it, the way he phrases it. Then try to copy his methods.

At first it will be a good enough exercise just to sing that particular song exactly as the recording artist does (do not be tempted out of your natural range, by the way). Once you can do this to your satisfaction, learn another tune on your own, without the aid of a record, and see if you can "treat" it in some ways similar to those of the record. Obviously you must have a similar type of number.

Do not miscontrue this into advice to learn a few tricks and then to sprinkle them over every number you ever sing. I do not mean that. I am merely advising you to copy for a start. Subsequently you will be able to give your own interpretation and embellishments.

At all costs avoid the re-iterated mannerism. Nothing is more exasperating, or shows so little artistic sense, than to hear a vocal effect repeated incessantly whether appropriate or not.

Many singers do this with a kind of "sob" or "break" in the voice. Done once, in a number which lends itself to such a trick, it can be wonderfully effective. But constantly repeated it becomes a nightmare.

If you want to prove to yourself that there are vast differences in singing with and without this "style," buy two records of the same number—one by a recognised style vocalist—a crooner, and the other by a well-known straight singer.

I am not going to venture an opinion as to which is better. All I ask you to do is to listen and compare.

One last word about studying from records. Do take the greatest care in selecting the right artists—to copy someone who is bad is obviously disastrous. And not all recording singers of popular songs are stylists, by a long way!

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Phrasing

PHRASING is very closely bound up in the subject of the previous chapters—style. I have, however, put it separately because it is such an important subject in itself.

Like style, there is little one can say about it beyond vague generalities, the proper carrying out of which depends entirely on the good sense and good taste of the reader.

Phrasing in singing can be likened to punctuation in grammar. Reading without punctuation resolves itself into a dull, flat monotone, without expression, life or interest. No one in their right senses would dream of talking that way, yet there are many singers who sing that way, and are all unconscious of the almost laughable effect they produce.

Try reading out aloud a passage from any book or paper without altering the level of the voice or pausing for breath.

See how ridiculous it is !

Yet to sing without attention to phrasing is just as absurd.

Before you sing a number, read over the lyric—try to get the sense, or " story," of it in your mind, even if it is of the most banal type. Emphasize the high spots of the " story." Tell the tale in musical sounds as well as the words—put in a slur here, a pause there, and so on.

Above all, breathe in the right places. It seems unnecessary to tell people not to take a breath right in the middle of a sentence, yet that is precisely what so many do !

When first you try over a number mark with ticks those points at which you think it would be best to take breaths. Remember, a breath-pause can emphasize some particular point which follows it, or which it has just followed.

Avoid the dreadful habit of breathing at set intervals, such as every two or four bars. Not only does this make a tune sound choppy and disconnected but completely destroys any character that the tune or the words might have.

Breathing is the basis of phrasing, so too much care cannot be paid to it. The taking of a breath is the strongest punctuation mark it is possible to have, therefore, take the greatest care in thus " punctuating " the song.

Some of the most charming and attractive mannerisms of style are the ways in which breaths are taken in unorthodox but not unreasonable places. Good phrasing is good style.

A hint to remember—change your phrase when the same passage is repeated. Nearly every popular song is constructed on the A-A-B-A principle, which means that there are only two eight-bar passages repeated in the given order to make up the customary 32-bar chorus. Thus the same eight bars are sung three times. If you change your phrasing as much as possible (without becoming absurd) your rendering will be greatly enhanced.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Pronunciation

I HAVE taught you, earlier in this book, the various vowel and consonant sounds. I have given them to you in phonetics. But even that will not make the man from Scotland pronounce them in the same way as the man from Somerset.

It is an odd fact that people in different parts of the country all think that *their* particular pronunciation is correct, and that everybody else has an " accent."

Now, it is not my wish to attempt to stifle local dialect and " accent," but nevertheless I must point out that there is an accepted standard in these matters which it is better to follow.

I have never heard of anyone with a pronounced provincial accent making a successful recording and broadcasting dance band singer. I am not referring to those who *specialise* in dialect songs, such as Sir Harry Lauder. But then, he can hardly be characterised as a dance band singer !

In brief, therefore, it seems that the would-be singer, if he or she is to attain any success outside his immediate district must adopt what is usually called a "London accent." Do not, I beg of you, construe this into meaning a Cockney accent, which is the error that most provincials fall into when they try to imitate a Londoner.

Why the London accent should be considered better than the, say, Lancashire, I am not going to argue. I merely offer it as a fact that existing successful singers in the modern style all have, or adopt, a uniform method of pronunciation. With the obvious exception of Americans, of course.

To show that this is no queer notion of my own, and that I have no wish to offend my many good friends in the provinces, let me quote the famous Dr. Worcester, who says :—

"The pronunciation of the English language, like that of all living languages, is in a great measure arbitrary. It is exposed to the caprices of fashion and taste. It is liable to change from one age to another ; and it varies more or less, not only in the different and distantly separated countries in which it is spoken, but also in the different divisions and districts of the same country. No two speakers or ortheopists, though inhabitants of the same place, would be likely to agree in the pronunciation of all its

words. The standard of pronunciation is not the authority of any dictionary, or of any ortheopists ; but it is the present usage of literary and well-bred society. The question may be asked ; Where is the standard to be sought, or this usage to be ascertained ? To this it may be answered that London is the great Metropolis of English literature; and that it has an incomparably greater influence than any other city in giving law, in relation to style and pronunciation, to the many millions who write and speak the language."

It would seem, therefore, that the non-Londoner had better adapt his singing-pronunciation to conform with the generally accepted pattern. To do this, I can but again recommend the study of the best type of records and broadcast performers.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Sight Reading and Memorizing

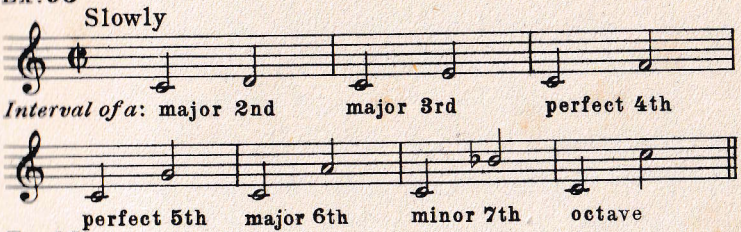
ONE of the first attributes of the successful professional singer is his ability to read at sight any song that is given to him. In professional life a singer seldom has time to take a song home and spend several days in learning it. Imagine the plight of the dance band vocalist with a repertoire of hundreds of numbers, and with scores of new ones coming out every month !

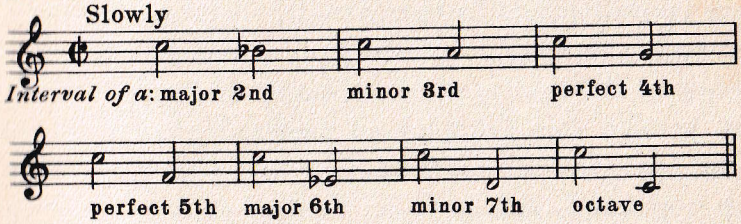
Obviously, to the professional, sight-reading is essential ; to the amateur or semi-pro, also, it is of the greatest assistance in putting them over as vocalists. No band likes to be kept waiting whilst the singer stumbles through the number, learning it by ear from one-finger piano playing.

The ability to sight-read can only be acquired through *practice—practice—practice.*

First of all learn your notes by practising the scales and exercises I have given you in this book.

Then learn to sing intervals (using all the vowel sounds alternately) like this :—

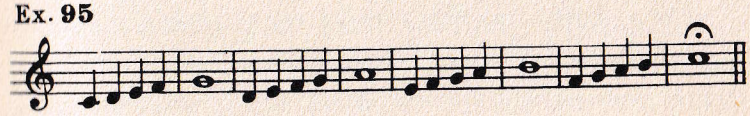
Ex. 93

Ex. 94



This will teach you to pitch your intervals correctly and instinctively. Sing these two exercises in all the keys. And write them out, saying to yourself the names of the notes, and imagining their sounds as you do so.

Once you have mastered this ability to sing in jumps, either up or down, practise short running passages, thus :—

Ex. 95



You will find it easy to write out hundreds of exercises like this, and the *writing* will do your sight-reading a great deal of good, especially if you do as I say, speaking the names of the notes, and imagining their sounds.

Finally, attempt to read anything you can lay hands on. Do not strain your voice by going out of its register—just miss out those notes which are too high or too low. But don't forget to check up your attempts by occasionally sounding the right notes on the piano. Eventually it will be necessary only to do this at the beginning and end. When it is, you can compliment yourself that you are making great strides with your sight-reading. But do not think you have no further need to practise when you have accomplished this once !

Memorising becomes much easier when you can sight-read. In the first place the musical mind is more at ease in not being " crammed " with hard memorising. Secondly, it will be helped by carrying a mental image of the music in the mind's eye, so that one is reading, as it were, from a mental photograph.

If you find difficulty with words, write them out repeatedly—nothing fixes them in the memory more firmly. If you haven't time to do this, or don't care to rely on it, write each lyric out on a

little card. Make the card as *small* as possible and the writing as *clear* as possible, so that the hand thrown out in front of you in a momentary gesture will enable you to see the first words of each line in a rapid and surreptitious glance. Keep a separate card for each number. I have usually found a piece of card about the size of a lady's visiting card large enough, or, if the lyric is very long, half a post-card folded in half.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Harmony and "Scat" Singing

THERE is not a great deal to be said about harmony singing. It is mostly a matter for careful rehearsal. The good soloist is seldom very much at ease in a trio or quartet. Perhaps because it so often happens that the other members of the singing team are untrained in the art of singing and constantly commit solecisms which irritate the man who has spent a great deal of time and a lot of effort in learning *not* to do just those very things.

Nevertheless, it often occurs that the band leader requires a quartet or trio chorus instead of a solo, and obviously it is up to the band's singer to take things in charge.

Pick out those musicians who have good "ears." The quality of the separate voices does not matter much when they are blended, but anyone who is unable to read or "busk" harmony is a nuisance and a handicap. Choose voices which will blend, *i.e.*, which have the same timbre or quality.

For trio it is best to have two tenors and a baritone ; for a quartet the same plus a bass.

It is best to make written arrangements beforehand, or at least to have some skeleton framework on which to fill in. It is easy enough to write out straightforward harmony, but this is very dull unless skilfully done and executed by very expert singers.

Try to get some novel tricks and breaks into the number—always supposing that it is the type of number that will lend itself to such treatment. Change the tempo, or the lyrics—anything to avoid monotony and dullness. Frequently a novel effect can be obtained by making every crotchet into two quavers and altering the lyric accordingly, in this way preserving both the original melody and the sense of the lyric.

Instrumental imitations on the lines of the Mills Brothers and others should not be attempted without great care and much rehearsal. It would be idle to give " instructions " for such preparation as the whole success of such trios and quartets depends on their originality. *Always bear that in mind.*

" Scat " singing is also a bit of a problem. It is dependent on the passing fashions of " style " to a tremendous extent. Its popularity has waxed and

waned several times in the past few years. Unless well done it is just irritating.

In any case it can hardly be called singing, consisting as it does, of a series of hard consonant noises with as little vowel sound as possible. The only justification for "scat" singing is that it can be amusing, and can also be most rhythmical.

As in other matters of style, current records should be the best guide of how, when and where (if anywhere) to " scat " sing.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Professional Touch

THE amateur, the beginner, or the semi-pro, cannot hope to achieve that quiet confidence and efficiency which is the hall-mark of the good professional. If they had those qualities they would not be amateurs, beginners or semi-pros !

Experience is the best teacher in singing as in other arts, and there is no book or even teacher who can impart this.

Nevertheless, there are some pitfalls which the experienced man can advise the tyro to avoid, as I have attempted to do throughout this book. Confidence and competence in all the subjects I have dealt with will go a long way to acquiring that poise which is so essential. *Hard work is the highroad.*

Self-confidence is most important to the singer. Nothing is more distressing to behold than a performer who is so nervous that he fidgets with his hands or his feet, or his clothes (collar and tie as a rule !), or who is so frightened of the sound of his own voice that he hardly dare raise it above a whisper.

Try to show that you are confident in your ability to please, even if inwardly you are in a state of blue funk. Don't swagger, on the other hand. Try to be natural.

If you are on a platform, address your attention and singing to an imaginary person at the back of the room, or at the back of the gallery. Avoid the temptation to catch the eye of nearby members of the audience, as this is apt to be disconcerting until you have perfect self-possession.

Pay attention to your clothes and general appearance. All public performers, remember, stand up to be " shot at " in this respect. Inspect yourself in a full-length mirror before you make an appearance on a stage.

Pay particular attention to the adjustment of the braces—see that the trousers rest comfortably on the shoes and don't show a gap of ankle . Collars and ties, especially evening wear, frequently become ludicrous through carelessness. A few shillings and a little care (and observation of what is being " done ") may save you a lot of embarrassment in these directions. And finally, your hair. Keep it well cut and well brushed. Hair which stands up on end may look all right close to, but on the stage and from a distance it is apt to make its owner look absurd.

Take care of your throat. Don't abuse it by constantly " clearing " it, or by trying to sing when you have a cold or a soreness. Wrap up well in cold, damp or foggy weather. If you should suffer from a sore throat do not indulge in " quack " lozenges. A little glycerine or Listerine spray will help those who suffer from a dryness of the throat. A morning gargle with some mild disinfectant will clear the throat and prevent the uvula from becoming slack.

When you make your first acquaintance with a microphone do not let it alarm you. Remember, it is your friend, the creator of the demand for such as you hope to be.

Do not sing straight into the " mike." Sing slightly across it. Some singers use the " mike " on a line with their cheek, but I prefer to sing obliquely across it.

Experiment with a few *ah's*, if possible, with the " mike " switched on. A few seconds will soon tell you the best way to use it. Keep your mouth about three or four inches away from it. Less is dangerous, because of the possibility of blasting; more than three or four inches calls for increased volume of the voice, which is just what is *not* wanted. There will probably be an engineer in charge of the " mike " who will ask you how strong you want it.

Until you have experimented for yourself, it is wisest to stick to " half."

Microphones vary a great deal, both in behaviour and appearance. Besides the stand microphones there are also those which can be carried in the hand, attached by wires to the main control. These are slightly less noticeable than the stand " mikes," and allow a little more freedom of movement. A further development of this idea is the " button-mike " which, as its name implies, is no larger than a button, and can be either carried in the hand, or worn in the lapel of the jacket. It, also, is connected with wires.

Whatever the " mike," *do not be afraid of it*—speak or sing quietly, as if to yourself ; try to remember a few of the things I have told you ; recall the hours you have spent (I hope !) in practice and above all, *don't worry*.

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